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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Note verbale dated 14 July 1999 from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations (Vienna) addressed to the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations (Vienna) presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and, on behalf of the Government of the United States of America, has the honour to refer to principle 4 of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (General Assembly resolution 47/68).

Although principle 4 only provides that a State launching a nuclear power source into outer space shall inform the Secretary-General on how States may obtain the results of the safety assessment prior to that launch, the United States of America wishes in addition to provide the information below:

The Cassini spacecraft, launched in October 1997, is scheduled to swing by the Earth in August 1999 on its interplanetary mission to Saturn. The spacecraft carries three radioisotope thermoelectric generators, to provide on-board electrical power and multiple lightweight radioisotope heater units to regulate the temperature for spacecraft operation and scientific instruments.

Pursuant to United States governmental policies, the United States of America conducted, prior to the launch, a thorough environmental assessment and an extensive nuclear safety analysis for the entire Cassini mission, including the Earth swing-by. Extensive information from those assessments and analysis can be found on the Cassini mission Internet site. Further information may be obtained from Mr. Mark Dahl, Office of Space Science, United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D.C., 20546.

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